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ABSTRACT

Following a brief account of the circumstances of migrant workers and the status of migrant education in the United States, this pamphlet describes how the National Education Association (NEA) has impacted and will continue to impact the process of providing educational choices for migrant students. The NEA has consistently testified before Congress in favor of development and expansion of migrant education, preschool through higher education, and urges continued support for the establishment of a national Portable Assisted Study Sequence program. Fifteen state NEA affiliates have agreed to execute their share of responsibilities under the 1974 NEA Migrant Program including: establishing migrant education committees; monitoring migrant education at local, state, and national levels; seeking to influence state and federal legislation and policy affecting migrants; developing awareness of migrants' educational needs among members, legislators, and the public; and organizing to meet teachers' classroom needs through development and use of a specialized assessment instrument (the NEA Profile of Excellence on Migrant Education). Every other state affiliate is urged to join this effort to alleviate the circumstances of migrants and improve their life choices through equal educational opportunity. (NEC)

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CHOICES Not Circumstances

Migrant Education Program

National Education Association

Instruction and Professional Development

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Preface

The National Education Association has the professional skill and political energy to influence policy makers from local school districts to Capitol Hill. The NEA Migrant Education Program illustrates how the Association can channel that skill and energy to solve critical problems, in this instance, providing educational equity for migrant students. It has succeeded in advancing construction of a system that can deliver comprehensive educational services to mobile populations. Its task now is to seek completion of that system and to enhance it by working for improvements in curriculum and instruction.

This pamphlet gives a brief account of the circumstances of migrant workers and the status of migrant education in the United States. It describes how the Association has impacted and will continue to impact the process of providing educational choices for migrant students.

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Travel Patterns of Migrant Farmworkers

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Migrant Workers in the United States

Low wages, seasonal work, unemployment, underemployment, job displacement caused by mechanization, critical health and housing needs, limited coverage in social and labor legislation, little or no education. These are the circumstances that shape the lives of migrant workers in the United States. Migrants traditionally have existed on the fringes of society, virtually excluded from every major benefit program that has been enacted. They live in some of the grimmest poverty in the country.

Migrant parents want something better for their children. But because of circumstances, migrancy tends to become a way of life for the children too.

Migrant youngsters experience constant interruptions in schooling. As their families move with the crops, the children go from school to school, sometimes for only a few weeks and never long enough to grasp the rudiments of learning. Oftentimes they are kept out of school to tend their younger brothers and sisters or to help support the family. Seldom are they socially acceptable in their temporary communities. Their health problems exceed the average for other populations, and language problems are common. Highly mobile students face the added obstacle of incompatible state requirements for a diploma.

It is true that today about 700,000 mobile children receive educational services in schools wherever they migrate, through the federal migrant education program. Unfortunately, most eventually decide they have little choice but to leave the classroom and follow their parents into the fields and through the migrant streams. Only one in ten graduates from high school.

Equally disturbing is the fact that many additional thousands of migrant children are not going to school at all because of the failure of our traditional system of education to locate, identify, and recruit them.

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The Federal Migrant Education Program

Congress created the federal migrant education program in 1966 to provide some semblance of educational equity and continuity for migrant students. In amendments to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), Title I (education for the disadvantaged), it in effect recognized that education in the United States was fashioned to serve stationary populations, that there is a tendency to overlook the *mobility factor* in writing policy. While local school systems can provide the physical setting in which migrants are educated, they cannot or will not follow them across school district or state boundaries.

The 1966 amendments authorized grants to the states to meet "the special educational needs of migratory children." The language articulated Congress' intent to establish a distinct system which could deliver services effectively and efficiently to mobile students. Under the formula-based funding program, migrant education money follows migrant students across school district and state lines. Disbursements are based on the length of time the students reside in a state during the calendar year.

Title I allocations for migrant education have grown from $10 million in fiscal year 1967 to $245 million in 1980. The money goes to 49 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico to finance over 16,000 local migrant education projects.

An implicit goal of the federal program is to identify and recruit eligible students. The number of children served started at 80,000 in 1967 and was approaching three quarters of a million in 1980.

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Student Eligibility

Any "currently migratory child" is eligible to participate in a local project that receives federal migrant education funds. The most recent federal rules and regulations on migrant education define "currently migratory child" as:

> . . . a child . . . whose parent or guardian is a migratory agricultural worker or a migratory fisher; and . . . who has moved within the past 12 months from one school district to another—or, in a State that is comprised of a single school district, has moved from one school administrative area to another—to enable the child, the child's guardian, or a member of the child's immediate family to obtain temporary or seasonal employment in an agricultural or fishing activity. This definition includes a child who has been eligible to be served under the requirements in the preceding sentence, and who, without the parent or guardian, has continued to migrate annually to enable him or her to secure temporary or seasonal employment in an agricultural or fishing activity.

If the family settles in the locality, the child is eligible to stay in the project up to five additional years as a "formerly migratory child." This allows for transitional and continuing special service he or she may need to become a full-fledged member of the community. For many migrant children it is their first opportunity to receive as much as a full year of uninterrupted schooling. "Formerly migratory child" means:

> . . . a child who . . . was eligible to be counted and served as a currently migratory child within the past five years but is not now a currently migratory child; . . . lives in an area served by a migrant education project; and . . . has the concurrence of his or her parent or guardian to continue to be considered a migratory child.

Federal rules and regulations also define migratory work. A migratory agricultural worker is one who engages in:

> . . . any activity directly related to the production or processing of crops, dairy products, poultry, or livestock for initial commercial sale or as a principal means of personal subsistence; . . . to the cultivation or harvesting of trees; or . . . to fish farms.

A migratory fisher is one who engages in:

> . . . any activity directly related to the catching or processing of fish or shellfish for initial commercial sale or as a principal means of personal subsistence.

Student Record Transfer System

A particularly important component of the federal migrant education program is the Migrant Student Record Transfer System(MSRTS). This system offers some solution to the problem of providing continuous learning for children who must be educated in several different schools in different districts or states during the year.

MSRTS is a nationwide, computerized communications network for quick transmission of critical academic, skills, and health information on elementary and secondary migrant students. Participating schools can initiate records for migrant children who are beginning their education. They also have access to the existing records of other migrant pupils they receive. This means they can avoid retesting and duplication of health services and quickly place the pupils in the appropriate programs.

Records are stored in a central computer in Little Rock, Arkansas, and there are teletype terminals in 250 strategic locations serving the continental United States and Puerto Rico. Other outlying states and territories will soon be tied into the system.

Management data are also extractable from the MSRTS. The major purpose for such data is, of course, the disbursement of funds to the states. The use of summarized information on school attendance, grade/age distributions, testing, special needs and interests, etc., results in improved planning, evaluation, curriculum development, recruiting practices, and accountability for expenditure of migrant education moneys.

Other Federal Support

Other federal support programs, such as preschool, vocational/career, post-secondary, and adult education, may also serve migrant students. Unlike the Title I program, however, some do not allocate funds specifically for migrant education.

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NEA Impact on Migrant Education

The National Education Association believes that no child in America should be educationally deprived because of his or her circumstances. It has played a significant role in the building of a migrant education support system.

The NEA has consistently testified before Congress in favor of development and expansion of migrant education, preschool through higher education.

The Association affirmed its commitment to improving the lives of migrant workers and their families by voting in 1969 to support legislation that would ensure collective bargaining and education rights for migrants.

In 1974 the NEA adopted a program plan to help the profession delineate its role and responsibility in migrant education and other problems of migrant families. From the plan has come the NEA Migrant Education Program, Association policy reaffirming its commitment, and major actions toward improving migrant education.

When the High School Equivalency Program (HEP) and the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) faced extinction as part of the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA, administered by the Labor Department), the NEA helped convince Congress first to continue funding these programs and then to transfer them to the Department of Education. They were written into the 1980 amendments to the Higher Education Act. HEP helps migrant dropouts prepare for employment or college by earning a high school equivalency diploma. CAMP provides for intensive first-year tutoring and helps students put together a financial aid package so they can complete higher education.

NEA Resolution

B-26. Migrant Workers

The National Education Association is concerned with the plight of migrant workers, particularly with the education of those migrant children who are pushed out of school because of the system's failure to provide needed educational opportunities.

The Association urges its local affiliates to negotiate provisions that will guarantee protection and full rights for teachers of migrant children.

The Association supports legislation to assure equal educational opportunities for migrant children, appropriate programs for migrant families, and the right of migrant workers to be represented in collective bargaining by an organization of their choice.

Mini-Corps as defined by federal legislation should be instituted in every state that has migrant children in its school system. (75)

The Association supports the notion that population mobility "dictates the need to expedite informational exchanges between schools when students transfer." NEA "encourages its local and state affiliates and all boards of education to pursue steps to achieve an effective transfer process" (Resolution B-46). This, of course, includes utilization of MSRTS.

In 1977 the Association designed and presented to the Congress an administrative structure for a comprehensive system of federal support for migrant education, day care and preschool through post-secondary. The NEA believes such a national system is needed to correct the long history of educational exclusion and deprivation of migrants. The system can give necessary visibility to migrant education problems and provide national leadership for program planning, funding, coordination, and evaluation. Congress accepted the design and incorporated it in the legislation creating the U. S. Department of Education. The Department now has an Office of Migrant Education.

A deputy assistant secretary for migrant education heads the national office. The NEA proposes that an advisory council be formed and that it include migrant workers and teachers of migrant children. It also proposes that the Office of Migrant Education manage grant programs under several pieces of legislation, some of which need to be amended to provide specific language for serving migrants:

- Preschool services under Head Start
- Elementary/secondary migrant education under ESEA Title I
- Academic and financial assistance programs for migrants in the Higher Education Act
- Vocational/career education services provided through the Vocational Education Act
- Adult basic education authorized by the ESEA amendments of 1966
- Education for the handicapped

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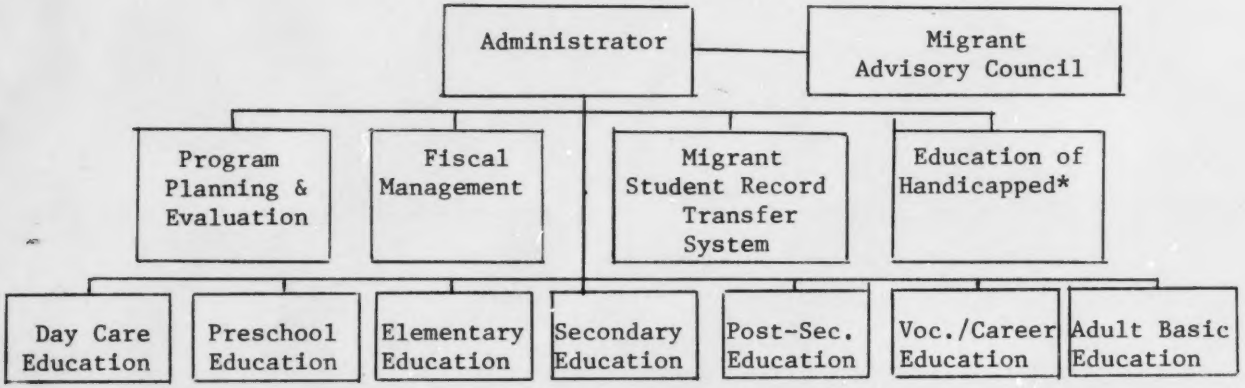
Administrative Structure for Migrant Education



*Integrated in all program components.

The Future of Migrant Education

Up to now the major emphasis in migrant education has been on preschool and elementary school. These programs are fairly well advanced. They reflect the aims of Head Start and Title I to compensate for disadvantages and lay the proper foundation for students' success throughout school. The challenge today is to keep migrant students in school.

MSRTS data tell us that most migrant children who enter school stay until age 12 or 13. Though many will continue, there is a persistently high drop-out rate among migrants of junior and senior high school ages. While the government must maintain and improve elementary services, it must give equal attention now to development of Title I secondary education services that will attract and hold more students until graduation.

Further, the experiences of HEP, CAMP, and other exemplary college-assistance models in operation around the country provide evidence that an increasing number of migrant students who stay in school aspire to post-secondary education. This means that more stress must be put on developing functional and appealing programs at the college level also, to make migrant education a truly comprehensive benefit system.

Completing and maintaining the system will require modifications in traditional educational practices.

Regular classroom teachers and migrant education personnel must cooperate in developing new curriculum strategies to accommodate the special needs of migrant students.

Teachers and other school personnel must be trained to prepare highly individualized units of instruction that will be used for short periods of time, and be able to accept the reality of not seeing the results of their instruction.

Teachers and other school personnel must be trained to use and motivated to contribute to an "electronic school system"—the communications technology required to deliver comprehensive migrant education services. The continuing cycle of transmitting student information across school district and state lines can promote development of educational designs that will lessen the impact of interruptions in schooling.

The MSRTS has laid the foundation for the required intrastate and interstate coordination necessary to ensure continuity of instruction. State agencies, with national leadership, must now concentrate on working out an agreement for credit accrual and exchange for the benefit of secondary and post-secondary migrant students who continue to be highly mobile.

These issues of program design and maintenance, recruitment, curriculum development, training, communications, and coordination must be addressed by research to validate practices, trigger needed adjustments, and develop new practices to improve migrant education.

NEA's Role

Completing the building of a comprehensive system of migrant education will depend a great deal on the resources and leadership committed to its construction. The role of organized teachers will be critical.

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In keeping with the national administrative design for migrant education which it created, the NEA must intensify its efforts to get the system completed. While federal funds are available to finance the day care/preschool, vocational/career, and adult basic education components of the design, they are taken from the programs enacted to serve stationary student populations. The NEA must seek specific legislative language in these areas for mobile populations to ensure that the money continues to go where the migrants go.

The NEA must also seek coverage in the laws of all mobile populations in our society—military personnel, for example, and urban migrants.

The NEA foresees an effective post-secondary migrant education program emerging from HEP, CAMP, and such models as the Portable Assisted Study Sequence (PASS, a correspondence/independent study program coordinated through a central campus), the California Mini-Corps (teacher and teacher assistant training for migrants who will work in migrant-impacted areas), and the New York Migrant Tutorial Program (an outreach effort conducted through educational centers serving low-impacted migrant areas).

HEP and CAMP, as mentioned, were included in the Higher Education amendments of 1980. The NEA also sought inclusion of national PASS and Mini-Corps programs without success. It must continue to push for passage. The Association has stated that a Mini-Corps, particularly, "should be instituted in every state that has migrant children in its school system."

At the state level, there are no legislative provisions at all for students who migrate within state borders. State legislatures must be persuaded to supplement and enhance federally supported education for migrant students within their own borders, to provide training and support services for teachers who have migrant students in their classrooms, and to modify their educational requirements and cooperate with other states to accommodate interstate migrants.

At the local level, school districts and communities must be urged to change hostile attitudes toward migrant populations and seek out and enroll migrant children in their schools. All teachers, whether or not they teach migrants, must be made aware of the continuing problems in

migrant education and encouraged to become involved in solving them.

Fifteen state affiliates of the NEA are forerunners in a plan to accomplish these tasks through a national network of education association programming in migrant education:

Arizona Education Association
Arkansas Education Association
California Teachers Association
Colorado Education Association
Connecticut Education Association
Florida Teaching Profession—NEA
Idaho Education Association
Michigan Education Association
New Jersey Education Association
North Carolina Association of Educators
Ohio Education Association
Oklahoma Education Association
Texas State Teachers Association
Virginia Education Association
Washington Education Association

These affiliates have entered into agreements with the national organization to execute their share of responsibilities under the NEA Migrant Education Program, including establishment of migrant education committees. They are—

- Monitoring migrant education at local, state, and national levels
- Seeking to influence state and federal legislation and policy making affecting migrants
- Developing awareness about migrants' educational needs among members, legislators, and the public
- Organizing to meet teachers' classroom needs through development and use of a specialized assessment instrument—the NEA Profile of Excellence on Migrant Education.

Every other state affiliate is urged to join this effort to alleviate the circumstances of migrants and improve their life choices through equal educational opportunity. For further information, contact:

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